

02/21/09 - Announcing Your Adoption Decision



When a couple makes the decision to adopt they will probably be excited with the prospect of a new child in their lives. Normally, when people have exciting news they want to share it with all their family and friends. But not every couple who is adopting is entirely sure if they want to tell everyone about their decision. They may wonder if people will be happy or if they will say negative things about their decision to adopt.

It's normal for people entering adoption to ask others who are in the adoption process or have adopted, "When did you tell others that you were going to adopt?" I have heard this question numerous times during my Adoption Support meetings. I like to start my answer with, "It's a personal decision?". I really do believe that it's best for the couple entering adoption to discuss it with each other first to find their comfort level. Everyone's comfort level will be different. Some would love to shout it from the rooftops while others would like to inform others about their decision to adopt only once they have their child safely in their home.

Why does it Matter When You Tell People?

Some people may wonder why this decision to tell others of your plan to adopt is

even an issue. Not everyone likes to have others know their personal business. Adoption definitely qualifies as personal business as there are many personal decisions that the couple will make along their journey to their child. Once you tell someone that you are going to adopt, you could easily be bombarded with personal questions. Some of these may include, "What race will the child be?" "How much are you going to have to pay?" or "Are you only going to get a healthy baby?"

Couples who are adopting need to have done enough research so that they can correctly answer questions when they announce that they are adopting. If the couples don't have the answers then they could appear not ready to adopt in the eyes of their friends or family. The couple doesn't need all the answers but enough to seem confident in their decision. For example, if they are asked, "Isn't it going to take five or six years to get a baby?" they can confidently reply, "Actually no. With the agencies we are researching most couples adopt a newborn within a year."

Negatives from the Announcement

As with most things in life, the couple should realize that they are not going to please everyone. If they announce they are going to adopt internationally, they will hear, "But aren't there so many kids here in the USA to adopt?" If the couple says they are adopting a domestic newborn they will hear "But aren't there older waiting children in foster care?" or "What about all those poor children in the orphanages overseas?" If they are going to adopt through the foster care system they will hear the same previous comment plus "But all those children have issues. Why don't you want a baby?" You will not be able to please everyone with your personal adoption decisions. Remain confident and do not be swayed by any of these comments.

Once you mention the word adoption, some people's mind will automatically think of the worst possible adoption story. Instead of being happy for you they may make comments such as, "I read about some girl from China that had an undetected heart problem when she was adopted. Her parents were so overwhelmed that they let someone else adopt her." Or something like, "On TV I saw that a Birthmother

came back after three years and took back her son from his adoptive parents.? As a couple entering adoption, you will have to remind people that most all adoptions occur without any problems. The ones that do have issues are few and that?s why they do end up in the paper or on the news. It is hard to hear these depressing stories from people when are happy about your adoption plans.

So can you avoid telling anyone about your decision for awhile? Not for too long because you will have to tell some people when you complete your Homestudy. Your boss will need to fill out a form regarding your employment. If you are using a religious agency, you may need to get a letter from your priest or minister. Also, personal reference letters from around three to seven people may be needed. You?ll have no choice but to decide what friends and family you want to tell about your adoption plan.

Positives from the Announcement

So are there any good reasons to announce your adoption decision to anyone else before you have your child? Absolutely yes. There are advantages to being open about your decision. One huge one is that you could through word of mouth find a potential Birthmother. I have heard of more than one story that started with someone announcing their decision to a friend. From there it?s usually something like that friend?s mother has a co-worker who has a neighbor whose daughter was pregnant and thinking of placing the baby for adoption. It?s amazing to hear these stories that started with a simple announcement of adoption plans and ended with an unexpected adoption of a baby.

Another advantage of telling others early in the adoption process is that you may find support where you never expected it. You could mention your adoption plan to a neighbor and he could tell you that their children were adopted. You may have never known that information before if you had not mentioned your own adoption. Now you have a great resource person to help you in the process. Or you could tell the cashier you always see at the grocery store that you are starting the adoption process. She may say that her son just arrived home from Russia with a new child.

He found his agency by attending a local Adoption Support Group. Now you have new information about a support group that definitely can help you. Plus, you now know of someone who just adopted and has updated information about the process to share with you.

If you choose to announce your adoption plans early on and then you have a quick adoption you will be grateful with your decision. Adoption can happen very quickly at times. I was selected by potential Birthparents only three weeks after our paperwork was completed for our first adoption. Luckily we had another two months before the due date but there isn't always time to prepare. My other two adoptions were hospital births. That means the baby was already born when we were selected and we immediately went to the hospital to get the child. Many people in my life already knew we were planning to adopt so it was easy to call friends and receive immediate help without explanation.

Foster care adoptions can happen at any time with just a phone call. Suddenly within hours there could be a child at your house. With international adoptions, there is more of a timeline but I have heard of unexpected short referrals. It's not a guarantee that you'll have much time between referral and travel time. So it seems best to have people in your life that can help you out if you are in a pinch trying to prepare for your new child.

Risks vs. Rewards

Overall, there are risks and rewards for sharing your exciting news early in the process that you are going to adopt. The main risk is that you may have some annoying comments and questions. Everyone will have an adoption story to share as everyone seems knows someone who has adopted. Also, you will have to hear "Hear anything yet from the agency?" many times from those you've told. During those periods it may be difficult to remain confident and happy with your decision to share your adoption plans with others.

The rewards of telling the news are that you will get a lot of support from others. Most people will be extremely happy for you and very excited to be part of your journey to your child. They could tell others that may bring potential adoption cases to your attention. They could offer you support and information in ways that you never could have expected.

So my answer to the question, "When did you tell others that you were going to adopt?" is that it's a personal decision between you and your partner. Together you should decide who you are going to tell and how much information you are going to share. Next, make sure you have done your research so you can answer basic questions about your adoption decisions. Then my personal opinion is to tell everyone the wonderful news whenever you have a chance. Don't be embarrassed by it. Embrace this decision just as much as you will embrace your future child. Share it with the world and hopefully only good things will come of it.

Danielle I Pennel

Three Yellow Roses

www.threeyellowroses.com